

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 03857 01 OF 02 111136Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----086541 111155Z /50
O 111037Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 8646

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
USCINCEUR VAHINGEN GE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 3857

EXDIS

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, LE
SUBJ: LEBANON CRISIS: PULLING TEETH AT THE PRESIDENTIAL
PALACE

1. JULY 10 WAS ONE OF THOSE DAYS. IN THE EARLY AFTERNOON I
HAD A RATHER OPTIMISTIC CONVERSATION WITH GHASSAN TUENI, MY
FAVORITE LEBANESE GURU, WHO IS FULL OF IDEAS AS TO HOW THE
CURRENT CRISIS CAN BE RESOLVED AND PARLAYED INTO VICTORY.
AT 1600 I MET WITH DANY CHAMOUN, WHO ALSO EMPHASIZED THE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 03857 01 OF 02 111136Z

POSITIVE, BUT WHOSE OPTIC IS ALWAYS A LITTLE AWRY. IN THIS
INSTANCE, HE MAINTAINED THAT THE SYRIAN ATTACK ON THE
CHRISTIANS WAS ACTUALLY A REFLECTION OF THE SECRET AGGANGE-
MENT BETWEEN ASSAD AND SADAT TO PRETEND THEY DIFFERED OVER
THE LATTER'S PEACE INITIATIVE.

2. AT 1830 I WENT OVER TO THE PALACE TO CALL ON SARKIS. THIS

WAS AT THE SUGGESTION OF TUENI AND FONMIN BOUTROS, WHO INDICATED THAT SARKIS NEEDED A LITTLE PEP TALK, AND THAT HE LOOKED FORWARD TO A CONVERSATION WITH ME. I FOUND SARKIS STILL TALKING ABOUT RESIGNING. FAR FROM BEING CHEERED BY POSITIVE WORDS, HE WAS RESOLUTELY NEGATIVE TO ALMOST EVERYTHING I HAD TO SAY.

3. I STARTED BY NOTING THAT I WAS ENCOURAGED TO HEAR THEY WERE MAKING PROGRESS ON A DISENGAGEMENT IN BEIRUT AND SAID WE WERE HERE TO HELP. WHAT COULD WE DO TO SUSTAIN HIM IN HIS HOUR OF NEED? SARKIS SAID THE BEIRUT SITUATION WAS PERHAPS CONTROLLABLE, BUT THAT WAS NOT THE BASIC PROBLEM, WHICH WAS MUCH DEEPER. SINCE I HAD ASKED, THE FIRST THING WE COULD DO WAS TO GET THE ISRAELIS TO AGREE TO THE MOVE OF THE LEBANESE ARMY SOUTH. I SAID THERE WERE THREE PROBLEMS: (1) THE ATTITUDE OF THE MILITIAS (2) HADDAD AND (3) THE GOOD FENCE. I HAD GATHERED FROM DANY CHAMOUN THAT THE PNL WOULD NOT OPPOSE THE MOVEMENT OF A SYMBOLIC FORCE INTO THE ENCLAVES. DID THEY ALSO HAVE THE AGREEMENT OF THE GEMAYELS? SARKIS SAID DANY WAS TALKING ABOUT 200 TROOPS, WHICH WAS NOT ENOUGH. THEY HAD TO HAVE A LARGER FORCE. HE DID NOT ANSWER MY QUESTION ABOUT THE GEMAYELS. WITH REGARD TO HADDAD, SARKIS SAID GOL POSITION WAS CLEAR. HE WOULD HAVE TO COME OUT OF THE SOUTH. (DANY TELLS ME HE WANTS TO COME OUT.) SOMETHING WOULD BE ARRANGED FOR HIM. HE WOULD BE NEITHER PUNISHED NOR REWARDED. AS FOR GOOD FENCE, IT WOULD HAVE TO BE CLOSED SOONER OR LATER.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 03857 01 OF 02 111136Z

THERE WAS NO ESCAPING THAT.

4. I ASKED WHEN THEY ENVISAGED SENDING TROOPS SOUTH. WAS IT URGENT THAT WE HAVE AN ISRAELI RESPONSE? THEY (BOUTROS WAS THERE TOO) SAID NO, IT WAS NOT URGENT. IN PRINCIPLE, THEY WOULD BE PREPARED TO SEND TROOPS SOUTH AS SOON AS ISRAELIS GAVE GREEN LIGHT. MORE URGENT AT THE MOMENT WAS THAT WE GET THE ISRAELIS TO TELL THE CHRISTIANS IN BEIRUT THEY WERE NOT GOING TO LAND TROOPS TO SAVE THEM. I SAID I GATHERED FROM DANY CHAMOUN AND FROM OUR EMBASSY IN TEL AVIV THAT THIS MESSAGE HAD ALREADY BEEN DELIVERED. I THOUGHT ISRAELIS HAD DONE THEIR DUTY IN THIS RESPECT.

5. BOUTROS THEN ASKED ME TO TELL PRESIDENT MY VIEWS ON POSSIBILITY OF A LIMITED ARAB SUMMIT TO REVIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF CAIRO AND RIYADH AGREEMENTS. AFTER I SAID THIS LOOKED TO ME LIKE THE WAY OUT, SARKIS SAID SYRIANS WOULD OPPOSE SUCH A MOVE AND HE DID NOT WANT TO GET INTO A QUARREL WITH THEM.

6. SARKIS THEN WENT ON TO SAY THAT I WAS LOOKING ONLY AT THE POSITIVE AND NOT THE NEGATIVE SIDE OF THINGS. EVERYONE KEPT TELLING HIM TO STAY ON, BUT NO ONE ADMITTED THE IMPOSSIBILITY

OF HIS SITUATION. THERE WAS NO RULE IN LEBANON. THE POLICE-
MAN WAS AFRAID TO GIVE A TICKET. THE JUDGE WAS AFRAID TO
PASS JUDGEMENT. HE COULD NOT USE THE SYRIANS AS ENFORCERS

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 3857

EXDIS

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

BECAUSE THEY WERE PREPARED TO MOVE ONLY AGAINST THE CHRISTIANS.
WHAT WAS HE SUPPOSED TO DO, STAND AND WATCH ASHRAFIYAH GOING
UP IN SMOKE? I ADMITTED TO A POSITIVE APPROACH AND SAID THAT
IF ONE CONCENTRATED ON THE POSITIVE ELEMENTS IN A SITUA-
TION AND TRIED TO WORK WITH THEM, IT OFTEN MADE POSSIBLE
SOLUTION OF OTHER ASKPECTS.

7. SARKIS SAID EVEN THE AMERICANS HAD BEEN COMPLAINING ABOUT
THE LACK OF PROGRESS UNDER HIS REGIME. NOT ME PERSONALLY,
BUT OFFICIALS OF THE USG. BUFFAM AT THE UN HAD SAID SO. I
SAID PEOPLE IN GENERAL HAD BEEN UNHAPPY WITH THE LACK OF PRO-
GRESS AND HAD COMPLAINED THAT HE DID NOT REACT FORCEFULLY
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 03857 02 OF 02 111136Z

ENOUGH. BOUTROS CHIMED IN WITH SOMETHING ABOUT THE NEED FOR PUBLIC APPEARANCES. PRESIDENT REPLIED THAT THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE HE HAD BEEN DISPOSED NOT TO UNDERTAKE ENTERPRISES WHICH WERE LIKELY TO FAIL. NOTHING I HAD PROPOSED SO FAR WOULD WORK. WITH MY KNOWLEDGE OF LEBANON I, OF ALL PEOPLE, SHOULD KNOW THAT. I SHOULD KNOW HOW IMPOSSIBLE IT WAS FOR HIM TO DO ANYTHING.

8. I SAID OPTIMISM WAS TO A DIPLOMAT WHAT COURAGE WAS TO A SOLDIER AND IF ONE APPROACHED PROBLEMS WITH A POSITIVE SPIRIT AND DID SOMETHING ABOUT THEM, PROGRESS WAS POSSIBLE. I UNDERSTOOD PERFECTLY HOW HE FELT, BUT HE HAD TOLD ME HIMSELF ON AN EARLIER OCCASION THAT THE ONLY WAY HE COULD OPERATE WAS TO CONCENTRATE ON THIS ASPECT OR THAT OF A PROBLEM AND TRY TO RESOLVE IT. HE HAD A NUMBER OF TRUMPS IN HIS HAND AS A RESULT OF HIS PROPOSED RESIGNATION. HE SHOULD PLAY THEM, AND QUICKLY. WERE I IN HIS SHOES I WOULD ASSEMBLY THE LEADERS OF THE COUNTRY, TELL THEM WHAT I WANTED AND THREATEN TO RESIGN IF THEY DID NOT COME FORWARD WITH IT. HE SAID I KNEW FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE THAT IF HE DID THAT SHEIKH PIERRE WOULD RUSH FORWARD WITH A DECLARATION THAT WAS 200 PER CENT FOR THE PRESIDENT AND THEN GO OUT AND DO THE CONTRARY. I SAID SHEIKH PIERRE WASN'T THE ONLY WOLF IN THE FOREST, TO WHICH SARKIS REPLIED HE WAS THE BEST ORGANIZED.

9. THE EXCHANGE WENT ON IN THIS VEIN FOR AN HOUR, WITH SARKIS TAKING A NEGATIVE VIEW OF EVERYTHING. I ASKED IF THERE WAS ANYONE HE WANTED US TO TALK TO--CHAMOUN, GEMAYEL, SYRIANS, SAUDIS, WHATEVER. SARKIS SAID NO. HE MIGHT LATER, BUT NOT FOR THE MOMENT. FINALLY, I LEFT SOMEWHAT DISCOURAGED. BOUTROS WENT WITH ME TO THE ELEVATOR (WE HAD MET IN SARKIS' PRIVATE APARTMENT ON THE FIRST FLOOR, WHO WHICH HE SEEMS TO HAVE RETREATED SINCE ANNOUNCING HIS INTENT TO RESIGN). I

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 03857 02 OF 02 111136Z

SAID SARKIS SEEMED PRETTY DEPRESSED TO ME. BOUTROS SAID HE WAS LESS SO THAN HE SEEMED. IT WAS THE END OF THE DAY AND HE WAS TIRED. HE WAS ACTUALLY IN THE PROCESS OF DRAWING UP A LIST OF DEMANDS HE WAS GOING TO MAKE TO THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND IF THEY DID NOT GIVE HIM THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE PROGRAM HE HAD IN MIND, THEN HE WOULD PERHAPS QUIT.

10. COMMENT: I HAVE NOTICES THAT A DEMARCHE WHICH APPEARS TO BE WITHOUT EFFECT INITIALLY SOMETIMES SINKS IN ON SARKIS AND THAT HE EVENTUALLY ACCEPTS ADVICE HE HAD REJECTED WHEN

IT WAS PRESENTED. AT THIS WRITING I AM SKEPTICAL, BUT WILL-
ING TO BE CONVINCED, THAT SARKIS IS GOING TO DO SOMETHING.
ANYTHING. PARKER

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